

MUNOFS VI Research Report

Forum: Disarmament Committee

Issue: North Korean strategic weapons program (as an aggressor state)

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Introduction

North Korea is believed to have more than 1,000 missiles of varying capabilities including long-range missiles. Some have argued that North Korea is utilising nuclear weapons as a political tool to normalise relations with Japan and the West, and to retaliate against economic sanctions and embargoes. The North Korean acquisition of weapons of mass destruction stems not from an indifference to deterrence, but rather a keenly developed understanding of the uses of deterrence.

Some key questions and concerns include:

1. Is it possible for North Korea to disarm, and still maintain their geopolitical clout? Through what means?
2. What are the reasons for North Korea's continued pursuit for the development of nuclear weapons? Are these reasons legitimate?
3. How can the nuclear disarmament of North Korea be achieved? The carrot, the stick or a combination of both?
4. To what extent should other countries be held responsible for provoking the North and thus perpetuating their supposed need for nuclear weapons?

Key Terms Defined

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) - A weapon of mass destruction refers to any offensive capability that can be deployed at will, that when utilized will result in a considerable loss of human life, infrastructure and nature to a large extent. Additionally, WMDs will result in a significant degradation of the quality of life in the aftermath of usage. Undoubtedly, nuclear weapons are classified as WMDs.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) - The IAEA is an international body that aims to promote the use of nuclear energy for "peace, health and prosperity", and stop the use of a nuclear programme to "further any military purpose".

Six Party Talks- Talks between the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the US, China, Japan and Russia. Aimed at finding a peaceful resolution to the security concerns as a

result of the North Korean nuclear weapons program.

Pre-emptive Strike - A pre-emptive strike is a tactic employed to give the attacker a strategic advantage over its opponent in war. It involves taking the opponent “by surprise”, even before the conflict begins. A pre-emptive strike’s purpose is to neutralize the enemy’s threats before they can be used against one.

General Overview of Topic

The purpose of North Korea’s pursuit of nuclear weapons as an aggressor state would include a desire to gain much-needed aid from the international community in return for the end of the nuclear weapons programme. Some suggest that North Korea simply wishes to be recognised as a nuclear state, while others claim that the North legitimately fears an attack by the US or South Korea and thus, uses the nuclear programme as a deterrence.

Mark Hibbs, a Bonn based senior associate with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace , and one of the world’s foremost non-governmental experts on nuclear weapons procurement and development, believes that nuclear proliferation has to be countered through addressing the complex political factors underlying it.

In 2006, the North conducted its first nuclear test which was deemed as “a partial fizzle”. However, the subsequent tests, especially the ones in 2013, were more successful. Now the country has approximately 6 to 10 weapons, and “a pathway to many more”.

The impact of this continued pursuit of nuclear weapons would primarily lie in the international community employing more sanctions to North Korea in retaliation. Furthermore, North Korea would undoubtedly be seen as an adamant and belligerent state, unwilling to compromise for the greater good of the international community in terms of socio-economic prosperity. Lastly, if North Korea is allowed to continue this pursuit, it may encourage other belligerent states to do similar acts, harming the harmony of the international community.

Major Parties Involved

Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

The regime seeks a non-aggression security pledge from the United States, which deploys more than 25,000 troops in South Korea and maintains a heavy naval presence in the Pacific. Pyongyang also wants normalized relations with Washington and unconditional access to economic aid from other Six-Party

countries. Quintessentially, it wishes to gain recognition and parity in the nuclear age. Additionally, it claims to be a deterrent to counter the threats of a hostile United States and South Korea - deemed as the former's "puppet" ally. However, the North's unusually belligerent rhetoric and its recent resumption of nuclear proliferation seem to imply an purposeful provocation; it has been noted that their nuclear developments are incongruous with their economic goals.

Republic of Korea

Willing to participate in talks so long as North Korea shows its sincerity to the international community by implementing its past denuclearisation pledges. The ROK faces a severe threat due to the proliferation of nuclear weapons considering the close proximity to the North; thus directly affecting the ROK. Additionally, the placing of foreign troops on ROK's soil as a defensive strategy has direct implications on the nation as well. Despite the much heated conflict, the North and South seem to be in the process of normalising relations by working together to reopen a jointly-operated industrial park in the Kaesong border area in addition to the family reunions planned in late 2013.

People's Republic of China

Pyongyang sees Beijing as its long-standing ally and primary trading partner. Time and again, its leverage in the Six Party Talks has boosted relations with Washington. In an attempt to prevent an influx of refugees across its border, Beijing has provided North Korea with energy and food assistance. However, in 2013, it finally agreed to sponsor a UNSC resolution calling for sanctions against North Korea. Beijing remains troubled by the North's nuclear weapons proliferation in context of South Korea and the United States' response to boost its hegemony in the regime. Despite this, China is unlikely to withdraw support for the North Korean regime due to long standing historical and ideological ties. However, it cannot be denied that China has its own domestic problems and regional tensions, such as in the South China Sea. Increased troubles from Pyongyang are deemed as an unwelcomed distraction.

Japan

Has a major hand in this topic due to its close proximity to North Korea and necessity to maintain regional security and stability. Often plays the role as a mediator in the conflict and aligns itself with the US. Concerns have grown after missiles have passed over Japan, causing them to threaten the North with war threats and armed defenses if the former were to breach their sovereignty. Prime Minister Abe is considering the bolstering of Japan's military force in light of North Korea's contribution to instability in the Korean Peninsula.

United States of America

The Six Party Talks for Washington serve as a means to escalate North Korea's nuclear weapons program from a bilateral to a multinational problem. Fundamentally, the U.S. is concerned with the possible sale of Pyongyang's nuclear materials and technology to terrorist groups or hostile states. Washington desires that the belligerent state accepts IAEA monitors in the country. Washington and Pyongyang are

now trading conditions for resuming regular official engagement for peace talks, which would be more than just "talks for talks' sake". U.S. wishes to see a concrete and sincere purpose of the North moving towards denuclearisation. An example of this would be stopping the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or ceasing the conduction of missile tests - contrary to what is the current situation.

Multiple attempts at negotiating have taken place between North Korea, US, Russia, China, Japan and South Korea at convincing Pyongyang to cease its weapons programme. Although North Korea agreed to give up its nuclear ambitions in exchange for economic aid and political concessions in 2005, enforcement was tedious. Talks were stalled in 2009 as there was doubt regarding the extent to which North Korea's nuclear assets were disclosed.

UN involvement, relevant resolutions, Treaties and Events

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1970): An international treaty that attempts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, enhance cooperation in the peaceful utilisation of nuclear energy and to move towards the goal of nuclear disarmament, along with general and complete disarmament. North Korea has withdrawn from this treaty.

Resolution 2087: This resolution, adopted unanimously in the Security Council (January 22, 2013) recalled the previous relevant resolutions on the North Korean issue - resolutions 825 (1993), 1540 (2004), 1695 (2006), 1718 (2006), and 1874 (2009). Additionally, it served to condemn the rocket launch of December 12, 2012 by North Korea.

Resolution 2094: Adopted unanimously by the Security Council in 2013, the third nuclear test of North Korea was condemned and other nations' power to enforce these sanctions was increased.

Timeline of Events

1945 – Separation of Korean peninsula, into North and South Korea, along the 38th parallel

1950s – Estimated start of nuclear weapons programme

1991 – North Korea signs an agreement to permit inspections of its seven sites at Yongbyon which was followed by the start of activity monitoring by American intelligence agencies. Evidence about the preparation of weapons-grade plutonium was growing.

1993 – North Korea announced its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty that it earlier ratified in 1985

1993 – North Korea tests its first “home-grown” midrange missile

1994 – One complete inspection of seven atomic sights by the IAEA was granted in attempt to avert a potential trade embargo. However, taking the radioactive samples from a nuclear center at Yongbyon was refused. This raised suspicions regarding whether the North is still attempting to produce weapons-grade fuel from its limited supply of plutonium.

2008 – Pyongyang moves to resume the reprocessing of plutonium, aligning with complaints that the Bush administration has yet to fulfil promises to remove North Korea from a list of state sponsors of terrorism.

2008 – Six Party Talks collapse

2009 – Series of nuclear missile tests that result in new U.N. sanctions (June 2009)

2011 – Kim Jong-il dies and his son, Kim Jong-un becomes his successor

2012 – Freezing of nuclear efforts under Kim Jong-un’s dictatorship and allowing of international inspectors to verify and observe the activities, whilst permitting shipping of food aid. Deemed as a provocative pretext for developing an intercontinental ballistic missile, North Korea launches a rocket which fails moments after its liftoff. Another rocket launch is conducted in December which succeeds.

2013 – Sanctions against North Korea are intensified, 1953 armistice is nullified, military hotline between North and South Korea are shut, North Korea launches a series of missiles

2013 – North Korea appears to have doubled the size of the area used to enrich uranium at the Yongbyon reactor complex. However, the North says it will reopen the Kaesong industrial complex it shut down and proposes new talks with the South.

Source:

http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/02/05/world/asia/northkorea-timeline.html?_r=1&#/#time238_7109

Possible Solutions

The Carrot –

- Trade liberalisation by and with North Korea:

Would eventually ensure increased competition and lower price of goods, higher quality due to emphasis put on design and reliability and increased world output. Overall, this would help to improve North Korea's economic sector, increasing status internationally.

- Credit instalments extended to North Korea and capitalisation of their mineral resources

However, any decision made must be made multilaterally as a unilateral decision may be short term and not result in regional or international benefits. This could be an incentive as, North Korea will see itself as an integral part of the international community and thus have obligations towards nuclear disarmament.

The Stick –

- Inspection and monitoring of possible North Korean nuclear installations and strengthening treaties, sanctions and embargoes in place
- A complete ban on nuclear weapons, although it would be highly difficult to enforce and may perpetuate retaliation on the North Korean side.
- In more extreme cases and inability to tolerate belligerence, stricter sanctions could be imposed or a complete cut of diplomatic ties. The purpose of this would be to force North Korea into a corner and coerce them into backing down. However, it is essential to take into consideration the effect that this will have on their relations. Furthermore, taking into account that past efforts similar to this have failed, will this be an effective solution?

As with any other solution, a combination of the carrot and the stick should be adopted - however, the extent or proportion of it is open to debate. It would help to ensure that there is both an incentive for North Korea to accede to the demands yet, there should be measures in place to ensure that they are responsible for their actions, if belligerent in any way. It is hoped that the limitations of past solutions will be taken into account when proposing new ones. Moreover, as developments in this situation take place rapidly, a solution that is feasible in the long run and perhaps, flexible in dealing with the changes could be considered.

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